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October 21, 2021

Dear Members of the Corporation:

As a fiduciary of one of America's most distinguished universities, you have a special responsibility to model how university leadership should demonstrate its commitment to protecting higher education's fundamental principles. High among these principles is the freedom of members of the university community to express their beliefs, no matter how controversial, without fear of reprisal.

On October 8, 2021, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) recognized University of Chicago Geophysicist Dorian Abbot as a Hero of Intellectual Freedom. The Hero of Intellectual Freedom award is an initiative that honors those members of the academic community who protect and foster the diversity of viewpoints that is the lifeblood of liberal education.

As you may know, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Department of Earth, Atmospheric and Planetary Sciences invited Professor Abbot to give the prestigious John Carlson Lecture on October 21, 2021. However, in reaction to fury on Twitter against Professor Abbot's views on diversity, equity, and inclusion in institutional admissions and hiring practices, Professor Robert van der Hilst canceled the event.

There was no legitimate justification for canceling the Carlson Lecture based on Professor Abbot's August 2021 *Newsweek* opinion piece or his previous statements related to merit-based standards in higher education. MIT's commitment to academic freedom and the free and open exchange of ideas will be tested and judged by the university's response to this outrage.

Section 9.0 of MIT's Policies and Procedures direct the institution as follows: "In an academic community, the free and open exchange of ideas and viewpoints reflected in the concept of academic freedom may

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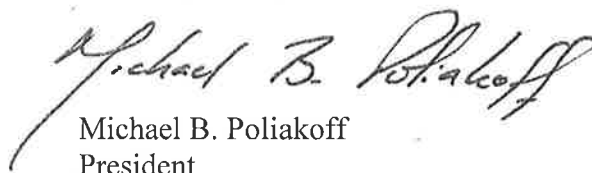
sometimes prove disturbing or offensive to some. The examination and challenging of assumptions, beliefs or opinions is, however, intrinsic to the rigorous education that MIT strives to provide.” This is an admirable policy and one that ACTA encourages you and your colleagues, as well as all MIT leadership, to remember when considering how to repair the damage that this disinvitation has caused to Professor Abbot and to MIT.

Though MIT invited Professor Abbot to give a lecture to the Department of Earth, Atmospheric and Planetary Sciences at a later date, it is an insufficient, arguably insulting response. MIT should do more to ensure that future guest lecturers are provided deference with regards to the academic freedom and viewpoint diversity that academic scholarship demands.

We also urge MIT to adopt the Chicago Principles on Freedom of Expression, which 82 institutions have implemented to date, and which represent the gold standard for policies that uphold the free exchange of ideas.

ACTA stands ready to offer advice and guidance on ways to build an enduring culture of free expression on campus. For more information, please visit www.GoACTA.org or contact me at (202) 467-6787.

With highest regards,



Michael B. Poliakov
President

Enclosure

cc: President L. Rafael Reif